

Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: R.

Date: January 12, 2005

Topic: Report on the Requirements in the Code of Virginia Regarding the Board of Education's Six-Year Plan

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Origin:

☐ Topic presented for information only (no board action required)

☐ Board review required by

☒ State or federal law or regulation

☐ Board of Education regulation

☐ Other:

☐ Action requested at this meeting

☒ Action requested at future meeting: Dates for first and final review to be determined by the Board of Education

Previous Review/Action:

☒ No previous board review/action

☐ Previous review/action

date:

action:

Background Information: The Virginia *Code* sets forth the requirement for the Board of Education to adopt a six-year plan as follows:

§ 22.1-253.13:6. Standard 6. Planning and public involvement.

A. The Board of Education shall revise, extend and adopt biennially a statewide six-year plan that shall be developed with statewide participation. The Board shall post such plan on the Department of Education's website if practicable, and, in any case, shall make a hard copy of such plan available for public inspection and copying.

This plan shall include the objectives of public education in Virginia, an assessment of the extent to which these objectives are being achieved, a

forecast of enrollment changes and an assessment of the needs of public education in the Commonwealth. In the annual report required by § 22.1-18, the Board shall include an analysis of the extent to which these Standards of Quality have been achieved and the objectives of the statewide six-year plan have been met. The Board shall also develop, consistent with its six-year plan, a detailed six-year plan to integrate educational technology into the Standards of Learning and the curricula of the public schools in Virginia, including career and technical education programs. The Board shall review and approve the six-year plan for educational technology and may require the revision of such plan as it deems necessary.

The Board of Education's current six-year plan (attached) was adopted in January 2003 and covers the years 2003 through 2008. The priorities stated in the current six-year plan are as follows:

Priority 1: We will strengthen Virginia's public schools by providing challenging academic standards for all students.

Priority 2: We will enhance the foundation program and the quality standards for public education in Virginia.

Priority 3: We will continue efforts to enhance the training, recruitment, and retention of highly qualified teachers and administrators.

Priority 4: We will support accountability and continuous improvement in all schools.

Priority 5: We will assist teachers to improve the reading skills of all students, especially those at the early grades.

Priority 6: We will provide leadership for implementing the provisions of the *No Child Left Behind Act* smoothly and with minimal disruption to local school divisions.

The six-year plan is intended to be viewed along with two additional documents: (1) the Board of Education's annual report on the condition and needs of the public schools; and (2) the *Six-Year Plan for Technology: 2003-2009*. Together, these three documents provide a comprehensive view of the Board's six-year priorities, the condition and needs upon which the priorities are based, and the future direction and needs of our system of public education. The Board of Education's annual report for 2004 was adopted in November 2004 and may be viewed at: http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/VA_Board/annualreport2004.pdf. The Board of Education's *Six-Year Plan for Technology: 2003-2009* was adopted in April 2003 and may be viewed at: <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Technology/OET/resources.shtml#etp>

Summary of Major Elements: As specified in the Code of Virginia, the Board of Education's six-year plan must be revised and updated biennially. The revision process must include opportunities for public input statewide. The revised six-year plan must include the following:

1. The objectives of public education in Virginia;
2. An assessment of the extent to which these objectives are being achieved;
3. A forecast of enrollment changes;
4. An assessment of the needs of public education;
5. An analysis of the extent to which these Standards of Quality have been achieved; and
6. An analysis of the objectives of the statewide six-year plan.

The Board of Education has scheduled its annual two-day planning session for April 20-21, 2005. The planning session will provide a timely forum for the members to discuss any needed updates and revisions to the current six-year plan.

In preparation for the planning session, the Board of Education is asked to establish a special committee of its members, as permitted under Article Nine of the Bylaws of the Board of Education. The purpose of the special committee will be as follows:

1. To determine what, if any, revisions in the current six-year plan are warranted, based upon the requirements in the Code (as stated above);
2. Determine when and how the Board will seek statewide public input on the six-year plan; and
3. Report its findings and recommendations to the full Board at the April planning session.

Superintendent's Recommendation: The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education appoint a special committee to make recommendations regarding revising and updating the Board of Education's six-year plan. It is further recommended that the committee be requested to report its findings and recommendations at the Board of Education's annual planning session on April 20-21, 2005.

Impact on Resources: The impact on resources for developing and revising the six-year plan is expected to be minimal. There will be minimal additional travel expenses related to the committee meetings; however, there may be costs associated with the public involvement process, depending upon how the Board of Education wishes to proceed (for example, travel costs for public hearings across the state). There is an administrative impact on Department of Education for the staff time related to preparing the text of the report. In addition, there is a minimal administrative impact for making the report available to the intended recipients. The fiscal impact is minimal because staff will use the agency's Web site and electronic means of communicating with interested parties whenever practicable.

Timetable for Further Review/Action: It is anticipated that the Board of Education will determine what, if any, revisions it wishes to make in its current six-year plan at the April 2005 planning session. Following that session, the Board will determine the timeline for review and adoption of the revised six-year plan.

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
SIX-YEAR PLAN:
2003-2008**

**ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION ON
JANUARY 6, 2003**

ADOPTED JANUARY 6, 2003:

BOARD OF EDUCATION
SIX-YEAR PLAN:
2003-2008

Quality, in education or any other field, is the result of research, planning, preparation, commitment, and investment.

Governor Mark R. Warner
Address to the Board of Education
May 23, 2002

More important than any single year's test results is the trend over several years, and when you look at the performance of Virginia students over the past six years both on national indicators, such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress and SAT, as well as on Virginia's own Standards of Learning tests, it is clear that the overall trend in student achievement is upward. We need to continue the improvement, especially focusing on the foundational skill of reading, where the progress of the past six years has not been nearly as substantial as it should be.

Mark C. Christie
President
Virginia Board of Education

The rewards education provides for each student in our public schools are vitally important to our society in a new and increasingly complex century. We must continue to strive to meet the educational needs of all students in the commonwealth now and in the future.

Jo Lynne DeMary
Superintendent of Public Instruction

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Board of Education Priorities for 2003-2008

Adopted on January 6, 2003

Priority 1: We will strengthen Virginia's public schools by providing challenging academic standards for all students.

Priority 2: We will enhance the foundation program and the quality standards for public education in Virginia.

Priority 3: We will continue efforts to enhance the training, recruitment, and retention of highly qualified teachers and administrators.

Priority 4: We will support accountability and continuous improvement in all schools.

Priority 5: We will assist teachers to improve the reading skills of all students, especially those at the early grades.

Priority 6: We will provide leadership for implementing the provisions of the *No Child Left Behind Act* smoothly and with minimal disruption to local school divisions.

**BOARD OF EDUCATION SIX-YEAR PLAN:
2003-2008
Adopted on January 6, 2003**

During the past several years, thousands of teachers and administrators across Virginia have been engaged in the process of bringing more rigorous academic standards to life for the 1.2 million students enrolled in our public schools. Classroom teachers and educators continue to be involved in every step of Virginia's school improvement and accountability process. Working together with the governors and the General Assembly, Virginia's education leaders have shown that hard work, high expectations, and the right standards can pay off in what really matters for our public schools—higher student achievement.

Virginia's governors and the General Assembly have provided additional funding for education initiatives through every recent budget cycle. This support has been critical to the recent success of students enrolled in Virginia's public schools. This investment amounts to \$7.9 billion in state general fund direct aid for K-12 education for the current biennium. For the coming budget cycle, the state will be challenged by tight budgets and limited resources, but the commitment to public education remains a strong public priority.

Previous Six-Year Plan: 1996-2002

Much was accomplished during the years covered by the Board of Education's six-year plan for 1996-2002. The priorities set by the Board for 1996-02 have been met. The Board's priorities for 1996-2002 were as follows:

- We will implement higher standards of academic excellence.
- We will institute a comprehensive student assessment program.
- We will revise the *Standards of Accreditation* to reflect Virginia's new focus on public accountability for Virginia's public schools.
- We will support accountability for Virginia's schools by developing and distributing a school Report Card for use by parents, communities, and policy makers.

During the past six years, the Board of Education has worked to fine-tune the strategies used to implement the priorities. Adjustments were made in the implementation of some of the specific strategies to make programs stronger and more flexible and appropriate to the needs of school divisions.

The members of the Board of Education intend to continue the progress that schools and students have shown in recent years. On several measures, Virginia's students are achieving at higher levels, compared to their peers in the rest of the nation. Our schools are not yet where we want them to be in terms of student achievement, and we have a lot of work still to do. But we are on the right track and are headed in the right direction.

The Six-Year Plan: 2003-2008

Building upon the achievements under the previous six-year plan, the *Six-Year Plan: 2003-2008* will serve as the long-term template to guide the changes needed to achieve a statewide education system of high quality. It will provide the framework for resources, policy development, and accountability that will ensure that the state and its citizens receive maximum benefits from Virginia's enormous investment in education.

It is important that the *Six-Year Plan: 2003-2008* be viewed along with two additional documents: The Board of Education's annual report on the condition and needs of the public schools and the *Six-Year Plan for Technology*. Together, these three documents provide a comprehensive view of the Board's six-year priorities, the condition and needs upon which the priorities are based, and the future direction and needs of our system of public education.

In addition, it is important to note that the Board of Education's priorities and performance targets for Virginia's public schools are embedded throughout the provisions of the Standards of Quality, the Standards of Accreditation, and the Standards of Learning. These and other key policy and regulatory documents of the Board of Education may be viewed on the Department of Education's Web site: www.pen.k12.va.us. The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* also contains performance expectations for the state and for the school divisions and the individual schools within the divisions.

The Vision

The vision of the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction is to ensure through high academic standards and accountability that an effective educational program is established and maintained in Virginia's public elementary, middle, and secondary schools.

The Mission

The primary mission of Virginia's public education system is to educate students in the fundamental knowledge and academic subjects that they need to become capable, responsible, and self-reliant citizens. Therefore, the mission of the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction, in cooperation with local school boards, is to increase student learning and academic achievement.

Virginia's Progress:

Improvement in Math Dramatic; Reading Gains Insufficient

The significant improvement in statewide Standards of Learning scores in 2002 is a notable indicator of success. Students posted gains in the passing rates on all of the high school Standards of Learning tests taken to earn verified units of credit towards a high school diploma. Students achieved pass rates of 70 percent or more on each of the 12 high school-level tests, which are administered at the end of the corresponding courses. Pass rates exceeded 80 percent on four of the tests, including pass rates of 86 percent on the reading and writing tests. Virginia students' results improved on 23 of the 28 Standards of Learning tests given in elementary, middle, and high schools. In 1997-98, the first year Standards of Learning tests were given, only five of the 27 (a world geography test was added after the program began) Standards of Learning tests administered had passing rates of 70 percent or higher.

More important than any single year's test results is the trend over several years. The latest Standards of Learning results continue what is now several years of steadily improving student achievement across all grades and in all subject areas.

In 2000, Virginia students made significant gains on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) mathematics test. The NAEP is often referred to as the "Nation's Report Card." The performance of Virginia's students on 2000 mathematics test is even more significant when compared to the last NAEP mathematics test given in 1996, just as the Standards of Learning program was starting. In 2000, Virginia fourth graders made the *second-greatest* improvement in the nation, and eighth graders made the *third-greatest* improvement in the nation. Except for the 1996 eighth-grade mathematics score (which was one point below the nation), Virginia students' scores in the NAEP mathematics tests have exceeded the national average in every year tested.

Results released in 2001 for the Stanford 9 tests show that, across the three grades tested, fall 2001 achievement was at or above the national average in 31 (94%) of the 33 *Stanford 9* subtests and content area totals. However, the statewide Stanford 9 tests show that results are not improving in several areas: sixth-grade reading, ninth-grade mathematics, and ninth-grade reading scores have remained flat for the past three years.

Results for the 2002 SAT-I show that the average mathematics score of Virginia seniors rose 5 points over 2001. Since 1997, the average SAT mathematics score of Virginia seniors has increased by 9 points. The average score of Virginia seniors on the verbal portion of the SAT-I test was 6 points higher than the national average in 2002. Since 1997, the average score of Virginia seniors on the verbal portion of the SAT-I has increased by 4 points. The verbal scores on the SAT-I lag behind the scores for mathematics. Addressing this lag in verbal scores on the SAT poses a challenge for our public schools.

In 2002, the number of Virginia high school students who took Advanced Placement (AP) examinations jumped to the highest-ever level, rising slightly more than 10 percent over the previous year. The number of these exams taken by Virginia students who scored high enough to be qualified for college credit also rose significantly. The performance of students on the AP exams is considered a key measure of a state's success in raising student achievement. More detailed information about state and national test results is contained in the Board of

Education's 2002 *Annual Report on the Conditions and Needs of the Public Schools in Virginia* and from the Department of Education's assessment Web page:
www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Assessment/home.shtml

When considered in combination with similar positive trends on national tests such as the SAT-I, it is clear that the Standards of Learning reform is working to raise the achievement levels of Virginia students. The Standards of Learning program has brought accountability and a new focus on student achievement – and it is paying off for our students.

The Challenges Ahead

Virginia's public schools are at a pivotal point in their history. The gratifying progress seen so far should not obscure the challenges that remain. The Board of Education's school improvement efforts have been in place long enough that we can see not only results, but also the most persistent needs and problems.

Taking into account five years of Standards of Learning test results, as well as national indicators such as SAT and NAEP, it appears that the progress of Virginia students in mathematics has been nothing short of dramatic. For example, the SAT-I mathematics scores are up nine points since 1997. NAEP mathematics scores in 2000 showed strong gains as well. However, student's progress in reading has not matched their progress in mathematics. SAT verbal scores have improved by only four percentage points since 1997. Stanford 9 scores have shown some forward movement in reading, but not enough. Standards of Learning scores show that at Grade 3, the reading pass rate has improved by 17 percentage points over the past five years, but more than one in four children still cannot pass the Grade 3 reading test. In Grade 8, by which time children should be proficient readers, nearly one in three still fail the Standards of Learning reading test.

The lack of more substantial progress in reading is unacceptable, especially given the significant financial resources that the Commonwealth of Virginia has devoted over the past six years to programs such as K-3 class-size reduction, the Early Reading Intervention Program, pre-K programs (both state and federally funded), not to mention federal financial resources for Head Start and Title I. As a commonwealth, we need to do a better job of teaching children to read. The Board recognizes this need, and has conducted a thorough study of reading instruction for the better part of 2002 and will continue that study into 2003. Among the issues being studied is teacher training in reading instruction and how teaching strategies and methods can be improved.

While the results for Virginia's students are encouraging, the challenge for 2003 and for the years to come is to maintain our forward momentum by deepening our commitment to student achievement and school accountability and to attracting, retaining, and training a work force of highly qualified teachers. These challenges occur in an era of a restricted state budget and increasing diversity in our student population. These factors, and others, combine to place increasing stress on our communities in terms of human and fiscal resources.

Another challenge to helping students master the content of the Standards of Learning is the troubling achievement gap that persists among various groups at all grade levels. For example, while significant improvements are gained each year, the pass rates on the Standards of Learning tests for minority students, limited English proficiency (LEP) students, and students with disabilities still lag behind their peers in every grade level tested. Similarly, there are achievement gaps among school divisions and among schools within divisions.

Moreover, in setting the quality standards for our schools, the members of the Board of Education are mindful that their focus must be on helping young people to learn the skills they need to get ahead in a changing economy. The key to learning to read is the literacy level of a child's parents, but approximately 700,000 adult Virginians have not completed high school, and another one million have finished high school but are deficient in one or more basic skill areas. Today's job market increasingly demands skilled workers. That means we must also focus efforts on career and technical training and on adult education and literacy.

We still have a long way to go to fulfill the promise of high academic achievement for all children enrolled in the public schools, but Virginia's school improvement efforts are most certainly headed in the right direction.

Enrollment projections and demographic trends for Virginia's schools

The school membership projections made by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia are used by the Virginia Department of Education for planning purposes. The projections show the number of students who will be attending public schools for the next five years. New five-year projections are made each year and are usually posted in March.

According to the statistics released by the Weldon Cooper Center, enrollment in Virginia's public schools will continue to increase slowly during the next several years. In the fall of 2001, a total of 1,147,673 students were enrolled in Virginia's public schools. The enrollment for the fall of 2002 is projected to be 1,154,278. Between 2000 and 2006, enrollment is projected to grow by 18,442 to a total of 1,166,115 students. This amounts to a 1.6 percent increase in six years.

The following information points to some of the demographic trends, including enrollment projections and general trends for the future. This information is important because it indicates the needs of schools and students now and in the near future—a future for which we must be prepared. A major trend seen in the demographic data is that Virginia's schools can expect to experience continued growth in the enrollment of the limited English proficient population and of students living in low-income households.

General population: (US Bureau of the Census)

- Portions of the U.S. population expected to increase at a rate faster than the general population growth rate are:
 - ✓ Illegal immigrants;
 - ✓ Non-English speaking immigrants (especially Asian and Hispanic);
 - ✓ Individuals 65 years of age and older; and
 - ✓ Individuals and families with incomes below the poverty level.
- In 2000, more than a fourth of all Virginia households that contained parents and their children were headed by a single parent.
- Thirty-one percent of students in Virginia are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.

General employment: (Virginia Employment Commission)

- The unemployment rate for high school graduates with no college education was 5.4 percent. For persons with less than a high school education, the unemployment rate was 9.8 percent.
- According to the 2000 Census, there are 700,000 Virginians without high school credentials who can benefit from adult education.

Limited English proficient student enrollment: (Virginia Department of Education)

- In Virginia, limited English proficient (LEP) students increased approximately 300 percent during the past 10 years. Seventy-six percent of Virginia's school divisions have LEP students enrolled, and the total statewide enrollment of LEP students has increased by 16 to 18 percent in each of the past three years.
- In Virginia in 2001, 50,543 Hispanics are of school age.
- The highest number of LEP students live in the Northern Virginia region. Approximately 75 percent of Virginia's LEP school population is enrolled in a school division located in Northern Virginia.
- The second highest percentage of LEP enrollment is in Harrisonburg. Galax now has the sixth highest percentage of LEP students, and the Richmond area — especially Henrico — is gaining fast. Virginia's census figures show that the rapid growth trend will continue for the foreseeable future.

Teacher supply and demand: (Virginia Department of Education)

- The predicted teacher supply for Virginia shows that the teaching force is expected to shrink by 4 percent between the years 2000 and 2015; however, the student enrollment in the public schools is expected to grow by 4 percent during that same time period. Thus, the supply of teachers is going down, while the student population is going up.
- For 2001-02, the last year for which data are available:
 Total instructional personnel statewide (teachers, administrators, etc.): 94,236.
 Total classroom teachers: 88,609
 Total teaching positions filled by unendorsed individuals or unfilled: 4,136 (4.4 percent of the total full-time equivalent positions), nearly triple the number in 1999.
- The most acute teacher shortages in Virginia are in special education, science, (Earth science, space science, and chemistry) and mathematics. Mathematics is the area of most severe shortage. Thirteen percent of Virginia's special education teachers are not fully licensed, with some areas as high as 62 percent.
- The number of minority teachers in Virginia continues to decline. Nationally, by the year 2005 the number of minority teachers will decrease from 13 percent to five percent. Virginia's teaching force follows this same trend.

Board of Education Priorities for 2003-2008

Priority 1: We will strengthen Virginia's public schools by providing challenging academic standards for all students.

In the final analysis, all aspects of the education system will be judged by their impact on the bottom line— student achievement. Critically important steps were initiated and implemented under the priorities set forth in the previous six-year plan. The Board of Education established what every student is expected to know and be able to do (the Standards of Learning), and implemented a statewide program to measure student progress toward meeting the standards (the Standards of Learning assessment program). The Board then set the performance levels for students and for schools (graduation requirements and accreditation ratings). The Board is monitoring the results closely.

The 2000 General Assembly passed legislation requiring the Board to establish a regular schedule for revising Standards of Learning, beginning with the history and social science Standards of Learning. The Board then set a policy requiring that a review of each subject area shall occur at least once every seven years. The reviews are conducted with input from teachers, school administrators, parents, and the public throughout the state.

In 2000, the Board approved new computer/technology Standards of Learning and revised Standards of Learning in foreign language and the fine arts. In 2001, the Standards of Learning in mathematics; history and social science; and health, physical education, and driver education were revised. In 2002, the Standards of Learning in English were revised. The revised Standards of Learning in science are scheduled to be adopted by the Board of Education in January 2003. The Board intends to continue the Standards of Learning review and revision process to ensure that the learning standards are up-to-date and rigorous. In addition to the seminal role the Standards of Learning program will play in future initiatives to raise student achievement, the Board of Education will continue its efforts to involve educators, parents, and other citizens in the revision and updating of the standards.

Virginia must strive to ensure that all students receive the instruction and instructional support they need to achieve. This priority includes support for all students regardless of challenges they bring in terms of learning difficulties or differences. We must support schools in meeting the needs of diverse learners, such as those eligible for special education, those who have limited English proficiency, and those with reading or other learning difficulties.

Strengthening Virginia's public schools by providing challenging academic standards for all students will continue to be the primary goal for the Board of Education.

Priority 2: We will enhance the foundation program and the quality standards for public education in Virginia.

The Board of Education's constitutional responsibility is "to determine and prescribe" the Standards of Quality for Virginia's school divisions. During the past several years, the Board

has initiated and completed extensive revisions to the Standards of Accreditation and the Standards of Learning programs—each a critical component of the Standards of Quality requirements. It is now time to focus on revising the Standards of Quality document.

The Board is currently involved in an effort to conduct a comprehensive review of the Standards of Quality. During 2002, the Board of Education held public hearings across Virginia to receive public comment concerning revisions to the Standards of Quality. During this public engagement process, citizens and educators throughout Virginia stated their support for educational standards and voiced their concerns regarding inadequate funding and staffing levels for public education and the need for additional state assistance to school divisions.

In the future, the Board of Education will review and revise the Standards of Quality at periodic intervals to reaffirm the commonwealth's commitment to high education standards.

Priority 3: We will continue efforts to enhance the training, recruitment, and retention of highly qualified teachers and administrators.

While high academic standards are important, standards alone do not raise student achievement. Teachers are the key. Test scores and rankings make headlines in the news, but quality teachers, principals, and other personnel are essential to Virginia's continuing improvement and critical to parental satisfaction with schools. We must make sure that there is a quality teacher in every classroom in the commonwealth.

Because of the critical need for high quality teachers and the increasing number of new teachers and essential personnel needed by Virginia's schools, our efforts must be focused on the training, recruitment, and retention of teachers and school administrators. We must also focus our resources on high-quality professional development linked to improving student learning. The Board's efforts must include the teachers and other staff included in the provisions of the Standards of Quality and the Standards of Accreditation, such as principals, assistant principals, librarians, guidance counselors, and other essential personnel.

Research shows that teacher quality is the most significant and consistent factor in student achievement. Likewise, principals and other school administrators must be supported, encouraged, and required to exhibit strong fiscal, managerial, and planning skills in addition to educational expertise. They must demonstrate leadership to assist teachers in creating the conditions in which students can learn most effectively.

During 2002, the Board of Education and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) initiated a detailed study of ways to enhance the training, recruitment, and retention of highly qualified teachers. The goal of the report of the Committee to Enhance the K-12 Teaching Profession in Virginia was to present a coherent, comprehensive blueprint to attract, develop, and retain skilled, talented, and diverse individuals who effectively advance learning for all students. The report includes a clear, strong case supporting the need for this comprehensive blueprint and consists of five recommendations. Included with each recommendation are strategies for implementation and expected outcomes. The full report, entitled *Stepping Up to the Plate: Virginia's Commitment to a Highly Qualified Teacher in Every Classroom*, may be viewed at www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/newvdoe/hq-teacher.pdf.

As an important outgrowth of the committee's efforts, the Virginia Department of Education received a major federal grant, which will provide an infusion of fiscal and other resources that will be instrumental in implementing the recommendations of the committee's study.

In addition, a committee of Virginia educators is crafting recommendations to the Board that will promote the development and retention of principals and other educational leaders who are committed to raising student achievement. Clearly, the findings and recommendations of the Leadership Study will help guide the actions of the Board of Education in the years to come.

The *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) places major emphasis upon teacher quality as a factor in improving student achievement. The new requirement that there be a highly qualified teacher in every classroom by 2005 is an important backdrop for the Board of Education's priorities. In addition, federal legislation also focuses on preparing, training, and recruiting high-quality teachers and principals and requires states to develop plans to meet annual, measurable objectives that will ensure that all teachers teaching in core academic subjects are highly qualified by the end of the 2005-2006 school year.

Priority 4: We will support accountability and continuous improvement in all schools.

Virginia's school accountability system helps to ensure that the state is meeting its responsibility for providing a high-quality education to students. Without such a solid accountability program, school improvement efforts can lose focus and momentum.

Beginning in 1996, the Board of Education worked closely with Department of Education staff members and a series of committees made up of teachers and other educators to develop a comprehensive assessment system to measure student achievement of the Standards of Learning. The assessments are administered to students at the end of grades 3, 5, and 8, and at the end of certain courses in high school. Accommodations are made for students with limited English ability and special needs to ensure that they will be able to participate in the assessment program to their fullest ability.

Schools that struggle with low performance have many challenges to meet, and providing them with adequate assistance will take creative partnerships and commitment to improvement. In response to the pressing needs of struggling schools, Governor Mark R. Warner initiated the Partnership for Achieving Successful Schools (PASS) program. This initiative was launched to give special attention and assistance to Virginia's at-risk schools. PASS has targeted more than 100 academically warned schools that, due to their struggles with the Standards of Learning tests, are to receive enhanced services from visiting academic review teams. Thirty-four of these schools have also been designated PASS Priority Schools; they will receive additional intervention and follow-up to track the progress made by students, teachers, and administrators. The Board of Education is pleased to support this important program, which is now well under way.

The Standards of Learning assessment program is the cornerstone of Virginia's system of accountability for the public schools and has enabled us to identify students who could benefit

from intervention so that they do not fall behind their peers. The Board will continue its effort to fine-tune the program and to make it more flexible to meet the needs of public schools and students.

Priority 5: We will assist teachers to improve the reading skills of all students, especially those at the early grades.

If students can't read, they can't succeed. While Virginia's students have made significant progress, students can and must do better in reading because reading is the single most essential skill for children to learn in school. The Board of Education's goal is to raise substantially the percentage of children in elementary schools who attain sufficient reading skills to be successful in school and later in life.

The ability to read all types of texts, including literary, academic, and technical, is vital to success in every school subject. Educators who understand the components of reading instruction and use assessments to identify and correct problems will find it easier to achieve the goal of all students reading at grade level.

A number of policies and initiatives are in place at the state and local levels aimed at improving literacy and reading achievement statewide. State-level reading policy is embodied in the Standards of Quality, the Standards of Accreditation, and the Standards of Learning. A variety of other initiatives aimed at improving reading skills, especially in the early grades, address funding, instructional materials, instructional technology, professional development, and technical assistance.

Recognizing the vital importance of reading, the Board of Education's Committee to Implement the *No Child Left Behind Act* has initiated a comprehensive study of reading and reading instruction in Virginia's public schools. The recommendations will be instrumental in influencing policies such as new teacher licensure standards in reading, new content and performance standards in English Standards of Learning, and other instructional initiatives.

These initiatives and others yet to be developed will address the five components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. In addition, the Board will continue to focus on reading by supporting the need for teacher professional development in identifying reading difficulties, using a diagnostic approach to instruction, monitoring student skill and performance, and compiling research data.

Priority 6: We will provide leadership for implementing the provisions of the *No Child Left Behind Act* smoothly and with minimal disruption to local school divisions.

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) amends the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA) by making significant changes in the major federal programs that support schools' efforts to educate the nation's students. NCLB is based on principles of increased flexibility and local control, stronger accountability for results, measurement of academic progress through assessment, expanded involvement and options for parents, and emphasis on effective teaching methods based on proven, scientifically based professional development strategies that have been shown to increase student academic achievement.

The NCLB Act has five performance goals to be met by every state, as follows:

- By 2013-2014, all students will reach high standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading/language arts and mathematics.
- All limited English proficient students will become proficient in English and reach high academic standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading/language arts and mathematics.
- By 2005-2006, all students will be taught by highly qualified teachers.
- All students will be educated in learning environments that are safe, drug free, and conducive to learning.
- All students will graduate from high school by 2013-2014.

The new requirement for reporting student performance by groups of students will add new leverage to local efforts to improve results. There will be a lot of work ahead, but many of the provisions of the *No Child Left Behind Act* reinforce strategies already familiar to Virginia's educators who have focused on standards, steady improvement, assessment, and reporting results for several years. These and similar strategies were the foundation of the Board's strategic priorities for 1996-2002, and most of these initiatives are now woven into the fabric of day-to-day activities and on-going programs for Virginia's schools and educators.

Virginia's public schools have already started implementing the new law, and the Board of Education has maintained its focus on ensuring compliance at the state level. A priority for the Board of Education is to assist the state and the local divisions to implement the provisions successfully.

Timelines for Priorities 2003-2008

Priority 1: We will strengthen Virginia's public schools by providing challenging academic standards for all students.

Action	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Review and revise the Standards of Learning:*						
Science	X					
Computer Technology			X			
Fine Arts				X		
Foreign Language					X	
Health, P.E., and Driver Education						X
History and Social Science						X
Mathematics						X
Ensure that career and technical education (CTE) courses are aligned with Standards of Learning and industry certifications	X	X	X	X	X	X
Provide leadership to school divisions to increase opportunities for middle and high school students to take CTE courses	X	X	X	X	X	X
Plan and implement professional development and technical assistance for instructional staff, working with professional education associations and teacher educators	X	X	X	X	X	X
Provide leadership for use of existing and emerging technologies to deliver services and provide information	X	X	X	X	X	X
Provide technical assistance related to Standards of Learning to school divisions in their operation of existing and expanded programs for at-risk students	X	X	X	X	X	X

*Note: English Standards of Learning, originally scheduled to be reviewed in 2004, were reviewed ahead of schedule in 2002.

Priority 2: We will enhance the foundation program and the quality standards for public education in Virginia.

Action	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Continue on-going review of the Standards of Quality on a two-year cycle: solicit public comment and conduct public hearings; review issues with representatives of statewide professional organizations	X	X	X	X	X	X
Develop recommendations for changes in the Standards of Quality; prescribe revised Standards of Quality requirements to be submitted to Governor and General Assembly	X		X		X	
Prepare annual report on the condition and needs of public education and disseminate to Governor and General Assembly	X	X	X	X	X	X
Review and update the Board's <i>Six-Year Plan</i>		X		X		X
Eliminate or modify unnecessary Board of Education regulations [four-year periodic review as required by Executive Order Number 21 (02)]	X				X	

Priority 3: We will continue efforts to enhance the training, recruitment, and retention of highly qualified teachers and administrators.

Action	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Review and implement recommendations of the Committee to Enhance K-12 Teaching Profession	X	X	X			
Review and implement recommendations of the Task Force to Evaluate and Redesign Preparation Programs and Professional Development for School Leaders	X	X	X			
Increase quantity of talented, highly qualified teachers by supporting and promoting the national board certification program	X	X	X	X	X	X
Comply with NCLB requirements for highly qualified paraprofessionals and teachers and for professional development of teachers	X	X	X	X	X	X

Priority 4: We will support accountability and continuous improvement in all schools.

Action	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Support the academic review teams and receive periodic reports of team findings; determine and adopt policies changes to address recommendations in team reports	X	X	X	X	X	X
Identify and adopt strategies for closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing students	X	X	X	X	X	X
Provide technical assistance on research-based instructional methods or strategies that will help improve the academic achievement in schools that are <i>Accredited with Warning</i> and <i>Provisionally Accredited/Needs Improvement</i> and identified as in need of improvement under the NCLB Act	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support the Governor's PASS program; receive quarterly reports from the external assistance teams; adopt policy changes based on assistance teams' analyses of persistent problem areas	X	X	X	X	X	X

Priority 5: We will assist teachers to improve the reading skills of all students, especially those at the early grades.

Action	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Continue to develop the action plan for improving reading performance initiated by the Board's NCLB Committee	X					
Review the findings and recommendations of the NCLB reading study action plan; adopt plan of action to address recommendations	X					
Provide leadership for long-term reading improvement of children by supporting adult education and family literacy programs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Work closely with teacher preparation programs on pre-service programs for teachers to improve their skills in teaching reading	X	X	X	X	X	X

Priority 6: We will provide leadership for implementing the provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act smoothly and with minimal disruption to local divisions.

Action	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Establish proficiency objectives for determining whether schools meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP); monitor progress	X	X	X	X	X	X
Produce Board and division annual report cards on progress of students in meeting state standards, graduation rates, elementary school attendance rates, names of schools needing improvement, professional qualifications of teachers, percentages of students not tested, and other information as required by NCLB	X	X	X	X	X	X
Develop, field test, and administer new SOL tests annually in English (reading/language arts) and in mathematics for grades 4, 6, and 7	X	X	X	X	X	X
Continue Virginia's participation in NAEP program in reading and math for 4 th and 8 th grades	X	X	X	X	X	X
Assist school divisions to conduct annual assessment in English language proficiency for all limited English proficient (LEP) students	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support programs of technical assistance for schools identified as in the first and second year of school improvement; divisions with any such schools must spend a minimum of 20 percent of their Title I allocation on transportation for choice provisions and supplemental services	X	X	X	X	X	X
Develop procedures and disseminate via web site notice to parents and the public of any pending corrective actions	X	X	X	X	X	X
Approve and provide a list of supplemental service providers to local divisions	X	X	X	X	X	X
Develop, in conjunction with local divisions, professional development strategies that the local schools will use to help ensure the development of highly qualified teachers and paraprofessionals			X	X	X	X